

Tape: 042 (side A)

Transcript of Interview with Bob Moore

Conducted by Jim Muhn

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INTERVIEW WITH BOB MOORE

This is an oral history interview with Bob Moore, State Director for the Colorado State Office, Bureau of Land Management, held on October 4th, 1993, at the Colorado State Office in Denver, Colorado. To start this, which will probably be the first of at least two interviews, Mr. Moore could you give us just a brief biography of yourself, basically, you know, your education and your career in the Bureau of Land Management?

Bob: Well, I was born and raised in New Jersey and went to school at the University of Montana at Missoula where I majored in forest engineering, graduated in 1955, started working for the Bureau of Land Management that same year in Coos Bay as a forester. After a year, I was drafted, went into the Army for 2 years, came back to Coos Bay as a forest engineer. In 1962, transferred to the Prineville District in Oregon where I was the District Engineer. In 1968, went to. I'll back up a little bit. I was the District Engineer and in 1965 became the Chief, Division of Operations in that District. In 1968, I went to Washington in the Departmental Management Development Program. And at that time, when we went to that development program, we were simply detailed to Washington. Went back there on per diem, our families stayed where they were. Our jobs were filled behind us, so we were people without a country. And completed the program and negotiated a job as a staff assistant with an assistant director in the Washington Office and then was officially transferred to Washington. My family moved back there in 1969. And I went from that staff assistant job to a job in the Division of Planning and Environmental Coordination. And in 1972, lateralled from that position to Chief of the Division of Planning and Environmental Coordination in the Colorado State Office. And did that job there 'til 1978 and was asked to apply for a job in Washington as the assistant to the Director for Coal Management. The Bureau had been directed to put more emphasis on coal and elevated in its visibility and priority to the stature of a special co-office with its director reporting to the Director of the Bureau. And I wound up in that job in 1978 and we completed a national coal program with programmatic Environmental Impact Statements to go along with it and established regional coal teams all over the West, actually all over the country. And in November or December of 1980, I was conducting a regional coal team meeting in Oklahoma City, putting that team together, getting the state representatives and the federal representatives involved in a team that was

going to go on and develop the recommendations for federal coal development in Oklahoma. And I was actually chairing the meeting and I got a telephone call that said I had to come to the telephone and talk to the Director of BLM. So, I called a break for the meeting and went and took the phone call and was asked if I'd be interested in going to Colorado. And I said, sure, what do you want me to do? And he said be the Associate State Director. So, I came to Colorado as the Associate State Director in January or February of '81. And from that position went to be the Director of the Service Center here in Denver in August of 1986. And came to be the Director for the Colorado State Office in December of 1989. And that's where I am now. That adds up to 38 plus years, 38 years and change. And, I haven't got it right yet.

Jim: I don't know about that. Well, let's just kind of take this in a chronological approach. We'll go back to when you started out with the Bureau of Land Management as a forester, right, correct? You were not a forest engineer or anything. You were actually operating as a forester.

Bob: Yeah.

Jim: At Coos Bay. So, what specifically were your responsibilities.

Bob: Timber Sales.

Jim: Timber sales. Did you go out and actually do the estimating or did you just do the office work of processing the sales?

Bob: Our life at that time was in a small, it was called a unit. It was very much like a resource area today. If I remember correctly, there were four of us. I was in the south unit in Coos Bay District. We worked in the office on Monday and we went to the field on Tuesday morning and we came back home on Friday night. And we packed lunches on Monday and took them with us for the whole week. A whole week's worth of

lunches. I'll never forget that. One time somebody came home early, didn't complete the whole week and went home for lunch and asked his wife to fix lunch for him and she said, why don't you just put on your rain gear and sit in the shower and eat the lunch that you took out with you? Anyway, we worked in the field four days a week year-round and worked in the office on Monday. And we all worked as a group, as a team, and whatever it took to identify a timber sale, do the road work, the layout, cruising, the appraisal, all the work necessary to get it up. And we had a timber sale, usually once a month, year-round. Ours was a relatively small unit with relatively low volume. My recollection is there were some months when we didn't have a sale. And we seldom had more than one in a month. There were plenty of units that had not only sales every month but more than one every month. We weren't involved in comprehensive land use planning, in recreation work or environmental impact statements or things like that.

Jim: So, you weren't worried about siltation [siltation?] or spotted owls. You just wanted to get that timber raised and on the market.

Bob: We had very strong commitment and priority to meet our allowable cut production standards. Our performance was judged almost entirely on our capability to get the volume out. Get the work done.

Jim: Did you, once the sale was made, was there any oversight of the contractor?

Bob: Contract administration was one of the principal requirements and there was an individual whose job was contract administration for each unit. And that person's primary job was to oversee work on the timber sales in accordance with the stipulations and the standards and that sort of thing now. That was not a full-time job, and that person was also available to help on timber sale layout. But, yeah, very definitely it was concern about oversight.

Jim: These units, I've read about these before and how they

were set up and since they are sort of the precursor to the resource area offices in many ways, was there one person in charge of that unit? I mean how exactly were you set up? There was a unit and I assume there was a district and then, of course, well, at this time, well. You came in just right after State Offices were created, correct?

Bob: Right. Yeah, there was. In the case of Coos Bay, there were three units. There were very imaginatively named. The south unit, the middle unit, and the north unit. The unit was headed up by a unit forester and the unit forester reported to the District Manager. When I first got there in 1955, there were one or two Assistant District Managers. Staff reporting to the District Manager to provide technical direction and oversight for the work of the unit forester. I think the total population in the Coos Bay District when I got there was around 24, 25. All the people, the whole district staff. And the annual or the per diem allowance was \$4 a day.

Jim: Pretty good for those days. No?

Bob: Well, it worked, it worked. We stayed in private houses, private homes. We stayed in logging camps. We camped out. We occasionally stayed in motels. And that seemed to work okay to get by on \$4 a day. That was, it amazes me now that we did that but that was it. That was the total. Average hotel cost plus \$4 or something else, it was \$4. I remember when it went to \$6.

Jim: When you were in Coos Bay as a forester, and that was up to 1962, I guess. Did and I've asked this question of some other people, ever pay any attention to the politics of public land management, or did that just sort of something that never really concerned you at the level you were working at?

Bob: Couple of things about that. The basic answer is no. We didn't pay too much attention to the politics of public land management. But certainly, expressed some concern about the effect we were having on the land.

Jim: That was one of my questions. Did you guys feel you were

doing good forestry at the time or? I guess there seems to be some question in your mind whether that was going on.

Bob: Well, yes and no. We did what I think was a. First of all, it's hard, it's hard to not get good reforestation in the coast range in Oregon. And I've gone back there since and traveled around the country where I worked there, and the extent and quality of the regeneration based on some of the efforts we put into it and some just because it works pretty well there is really impressive. There were places where we cut where we shouldn't have because of thin soils or unstable slopes. There were certainly places where we upset, if not destroyed, stream bottoms, either by logging across them or building roads in them or simply cutting all the trees out of it. And there were occasions when we suggested that maybe we could lay out a timber sale that would leave those stream bottoms relatively secure. We were reminded that that wasn't our decision to make. So, there was some concern not only that. I wouldn't characterize that as a political concern but a concern about public administration of natural resources that was manifest in what we say was the capability to remove old growth timber. Do a good job of reforestation without having the effect that we could see on water quality and fishery habitat. And I can't, you know, speak for how many people were concerned about that but I know I was, and I know there were others that I worked with who were concerned about that. But, on the other hand, it was not something that we campaigned about. We brought it to the attention of the people that we worked with and received direction from them, and we didn't go anywhere beyond that. We didn't, in other words, we did not publicly or openly criticize BLM's policies. We questioned them within the organization and within the hierarchy that we worked for but not publicly or openly.

Jim: Okay. To sort of change the subject then, policy that's changed today. I mean, more employees who are down at the resource area level are quite aware of the politics in public land management and some of them are quite vocal when they disagree. I suppose even when do agree with the Bureau of Land Management and there doesn't seem to be a shyness on the part of many to go to outside the agency to raise a concern. Do you have any thoughts on that? I mean is that do you think that's for the better or was it better in your days when you started

out when there was just this internal discussion?

Bob: I think our practices at that time were consistent with society generally. And I think the practices among foresters today are consistent with society generally. It would have been just as inappropriate, I think, for us to write a letter to the editor of the local newspaper or a critical article in the Journal of Forestry or whatnot as it would have been for somebody working in the local school system or the brewery or anywhere else to openly criticize their employer in public about practices that they saw to be inappropriate. But that was almost 40 years ago. And look at what's happened generally in society. It's a much more participative environment. There is much less of a indentured servitude approach between employer and employee. And it would be just as inappropriate now for people to labor under that kind of control rather than speak out as it would have been inappropriate then for people to speak out about concerns. So, I think our attitude was reflective of the day.

Jim: Good answer. In Coos Bay, did you have advisory boards like they did on the O&C?

Bob: I don't recall a district advisory board. If there was one, I sure wasn't involved with it.

Jim: Okay. While you were on Coos Bay, you were in a transition between two administrations. Eisenhower going into Kennedy. Two different Directors, Woosley, Lanstern. Did you for that brief period of time you were on Coos Bay when the new administration was coming on see any perceptible change in management of the forest there at Coos Bay or was it just pretty much business as usual? You weren't really there all that long. You would have just been there when the new administration came on so it may not.

Bob: I noticed that much more in Prineville, Jim, than I did in Coos Bay. I saw a little bit of a concern to look at the management efficiency and the concept of timber management in the larger context of natural resource administration right

about the time I was leaving Coos Bay. But I noticed much more of an effort to look at resource management more comprehensively between '62 and '68 when I was in Prineville. Now, two things related to that. One is new thinking administration, new emphasis. BLM was growing dramatically at that time. Just remarkable. Probably one of the fastest growth periods that we ever had. But also, I was working in the district. There was much more rounded and focused timber district than the O&C. We did a lot of things in Prineville that they said we didn't do in western Oregon. So, there were two reasons why at least while we were looking at things more comprehensively.

Jim: Well, in your job in Wyoming, you go back to what you were educated to do, I guess, essentially to be an engineer but I assume that you're not concerned with just forestry because in that part of Wyoming there isn't that big of a forestry program, timber.

Bob: Prineville.

Jim: Prineville. Oh, Prineville, Oregon. Oh, I thought you.

Bob: Not Prineville, Wyoming, Prineville, Oregon.

Jim: Okay, I'm sorry. I got that wrong. So, you went over to the east side of the mountains there. So, you did have some forestry there. Were you mainly concerned with forestry or were you also doing range?

Bob: Everything. At the time I got there, there was a fairly well-developed timber program, but they really had never done very much about road development, road engineering. They pretty much tried to use whatever was available or hoped that the timber purchaser would know how to put a road in or the just didn't. As far as I could tell, they never done very much with the engineering aspects of timber sale development. Though pretty early on, I got involved in a lot of timber work in Prineville and realized that I was never going to do anything else unless I found a way to teach those people how do their own timber sale work and so I gradually spent some time teaching and

training the foresters how to do a better job of road location and design and appraisal and so on and finally backed out of providing direct support to them, instead provided them with the tools so they could do for themselves. Got very much involved in a lot of engineering work related to range work, for example, pipelines and retention dams and that sort of thing. Got very much involved in building access roads. Not long after I got to Prineville, a program was put in place called the National Public Lands Roads and Trails Development Act or something like that. And, through that program, we got money for providing access to the public lands, either through new road construction, road improvement, road maintenance, or road acquisition. And we put a lot of energy into that in the Prineville District, got quite a bit of funding, built a number of roads, got a lot of easements. I had lots of fun putting in access roads all over that district. Also, there was a lot more emphasis placed on BLM as a recreation provider. And one of the major things I did in the Prineville District, I arrived there in August of 1962 and the District Manager told me that in October there was going to be a field tour with a number of people including those in the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation and the Park Service and elsewhere in BLM and State and just a lot of different people. Looking at recreation development opportunities on the lower hundred miles of the **Diffuse [Deschutes?] River**, that is to say from the Columbia up a hundred miles. And on that tour, he wanted me to do a briefing of the access opportunities and problems for that hundred miles. And I had never the **Diffuse [Deschutes?] River** down there. This was August and he wanted that prepared for October. So, I walked the hundred miles and did as much as I could to learn as much about that country as possible and did the briefing. And subsequent to that while I was in the Prineville District, did the preliminary engineering and a design and the construction oversight for the **Diffuse [Deschutes?] access road**. I remember when we were justifying that road, we estimated that by about 1970 or '75 or something like that, we estimated 75,000 visitor days a year. And that number was exceeded the first year. It was just phenomenal and remains a management challenge for the people in that district to manage the recreation use on the **Diffuse [Deschutes?] River** that was essentially opened up without access. So, there was a lot more of that timber work and a lot more than traditional range and forestry program.

Jim: When you worked. Then you were elevated to the Chief,

Division of Operations, so I assume your responsibilities and concerns increased.

Bob: Included fire. The engineering work that I had been doing, safety and a number of other things, and had. That was the first time that I really, really got involved in a supervisory and management role that included more than seasonal and temporaries and that kind of thing.

Jim: On fire, would have been pre-BIFC days, _____ interagency fire. The Great Basin Center had been put in about '64 or '65, hadn't it? Did you have any coordination with any other BLM entity when it came to fire or were you pretty much self-contained in your district?

Bob: Boise was in place or at least something was at Boise that was available to us, and I remember two things about that. One is a lot of coordination across district lines and with other agencies, either by agreement and simply because of the exigency of the moment to help one another out and occasionally responding to or getting help from whatever the appropriate name for the organization was at Boise on larger fires. And we had some pretty significant fires in the Prineville District. And one that I remember very, very well was a Forest Service fire that was in probably in 1967 or 68, I can't remember. It was either one of those two years. And a lightning storm had come all the way up the, through the Cascades, beginning down in California and going up into Washington, and had set off an enormous number of fires on national forest system lands and exceeded the capability of the Forest Service to staff them all. So, there was a big fire on Santa Ann Pass, national forest, and private timber company lands, two different national forests, the **Deshoots [Deschutes?]** and the **Moabit** and a couple of, or at least one private timber company. And there was a major landowner there. And the Forest Service did some initial attack but was simply unable to staff that fire. It was a major fire. So, we were asked to take that thing over from the Forest Service and it was a big fire. And I'm not sure whether Boise or some subset of that or some predecessor coordinated that, you know, made it possible for us to wind up being there as the agency in charge of that particular fire but that kind of thing hadn't happened very much before that, I know that. Sending in a BLM overhead team on a Forest Service fire, big fire, big

timber. That was interesting.

Jim: Yeah. In operations, were you also concerned with range improvements?

Bob: Yeah. Certainly, what was known as soil and watershed program, soil, and moisture program, I guess they call it, S&M, which was range improvement work of various kinds. And rather than just being involved with the engineering aspects of that, I was involved with the coordination between the range managers, range conservationists and the engineering people and the procurement people, and construction and so on to get range improvement work completed. So, it was more than just the basic engineering aspects of it, but more of a management, that kind of activity.

Jim: Anything else about those years that I haven't thought of?

Bob: I had a District Manager, his name was Don Robins, and he had been born and raised in western Idaho, north of the Snake River. He had worked for BIA, Grazing Service, a number of other organizations. He was well educated and intelligent, but he had an awful lot of common sense. I think I learned more from him about some of the practical aspects of public land management than from anybody else that I worked for.

Jim: What are those practical aspects?

Bob: Looking, listening, trying to see how things fit together. Observing for a bit before jumping to conclusions. Learning how to look at the country to see what was happening to it. It was worthwhile just to walk through the country with Don and listen to his observations about what was happening just by what he could see on the vegetation and the soil and the water and so on without having to do fancy range surveys or whatever else. He just provided me with some insights that up until that time I hadn't had from any contacts that I had. Being born and raised in the East and doing a lot of work with timber production, timber development, technology, I was the first person in BLM to use a computer for designing roads and taught electronic road

design to engineers from all over BLM from my vantage point at Prineville. And I understood that stuff pretty well but when it came to just looking at the land, I think I learned a lot from Don. I appreciated that.

Jim: Since you brought this up, why did BLM let you have a computer or access to a computer?

Bob: I think because I was interested in it. This was. I first started using a computer for road design work in '61 or '62. And the computer I was using was a Forest Service computer in Portland. And, later on I got to Prineville, and I mentioned earlier that I had been teaching foresters how to do their own engineering work and I also taught them how to use a computer to facilitate their road design with relatively primitive field techniques of surveying. Used staff compasses and chain and that kind of thing but still able to use a computer to facilitate their work very effectively. That was a Bureau of Public Roads computer in Vancouver, Washington, that we were using for that purpose. I was also using computers for culvert design, hydrology, and hydraulics calculations and that happened to be a Prineville power computer in Portland. So, I didn't have a computer.

Jim: Well, obviously, there were no laptops at that time and PCs were a little ways off in the future, so you were using a pretty big machine.

Bob: Yes.

Jim: How did you pick this up? Did you pick this up in Montana or did you just learn it as wherever you were at, this computer?

Bob: I just became aware of it and felt that it was, it made sense. It was the right thing to do and just got into it.

Jim: And BLM supported you in learning that?

Bob: Oh, yeah, yeah, in about 1965, the Chief of the Division of Engineering in the Washington Office was a guy named Remington. He had come to BLM from the Forest Service, and he was very interested in elevating BLM's capability in engineering skills and whatnot, and he prevailed on me to teach a course in Portland. And in the spring of 1965, if I remember correctly. A 3-week course, and there were engineers from every state in the Bureau. There were a total of 21 people in that course for 3 weeks. And, what he wanted me to do was teach them the principles of electronic road design using practical fieldwork, real roads, real data, teach them how to design a road with a computer, which we did. And people went on from there to use computers more regularly in their work. And again in 1967, I had another request from Mr. Remington which was kind of interesting. He felt that there were too few engineers in BLM who knew how to do what we called then direct locations, that is putting a final line, center line, on the ground ready to field without doing the paper design or a computer design. And kind of the other end of the spectrum from what he had asked me to do 2 years earlier. And he wanted me to teach a class in direct location and he wanted me to do it in Monticello, Utah. Once again, there were engineers from all over BLM who came to take that class. And he was right, most of them had no idea how to locate a final center line on the ground in the field. They had just simply gotten away from it or never learned it or never done it or there wasn't any reason for them to do it. I questioned why it was important to learn those old skills at that time. They had been used primarily by railroad engineers and by the early logging engineers. But I had fun doing it anyway. The following week, that same group came to Denver and had a course from the Bureau of Public Roads in electronic road design at the Federal Center. Anyway, to get back to your question, it just seemed to me like the right thing to do. I didn't get any heat from anybody, and it wasn't long before BLM was using that technology generally. That was kind of interesting to be using a computer the size of a couple of rooms to do things now that we can crank out a lot easier in our offices.

Jim: Were any other specializations you using, starting to use the computers about that time?

Bob: Yeah, they, the hydrology and hydraulics. I was using a computer for pipeline design then too. I was getting a lot of help from Bill Ball in the State Office in Portland. And later the Portland Service Center. But I don't know any other engineers in BLM that were using that technology in the early '60s but by the mid to later '60s, a lot of them were. I'm running out of time here.

Jim: That's what I figured. Why don't we stop it here before we send you off to Washington to float around for a while. So, thank you for today's interview.

Bob: All right.